The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

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THE Rev. J. C. Street begs to acknowledge receipt of the following contributions in aid of the publication and gratuitous circulation of the *Chronicle and Index*:—J. Irvine Smith, Newcastle, 2/-; Rev. R. Cleland, Crumlin, 2/6; Mrs. Lindsay, Derryboy, 5/-.

THE Children's Service at Rosemary Street was held on Sunday, June 7th, and was, as usual, well attended. The entire service was conducted by the Rev. J. C. Street, whose address on "The Story of a Prodigal Father" was listened to with eager attention by all the children.

A MISSIONARY effort in connection with the Unitarian Society has been commenced in Hopeton Street, Belfast, and gives promise of much usefulness in that district. Announcements have been made of the services, and handbills distributed from house to house in the neighbourhood. The elder scholars in the school have distributed these bills, and a number of them have attended the services, in some cases accompanied by their parents. The first service was held on May 31st, and was conducted by Rev. J. C. Street. There were 50 persons present. The next service was held on June 7th, when there were 65 present. The service on June 14th was conducted by Rev. J. C. Street, on the 21st by the Rev. T. Dunkerley, and on the 28th by Rev. W. Reynolds. On each occasion there was a very good attendance.

WE understand that Mr. Wetherall, late of the Blackfriar's Mission, London, has been appointed missionary at Stanhope Street Domestic Mission. Mr. Wetherall is an earnest and patient labourer, accustomed to visiting in the homes of the poor and the afflicted, and he will doubtless be able to do good work among the poor of Belfast. We wish him all success.

THE meetings of the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster and the Non-Subscribing Association have been held in Belfast. At the former an admirable and liberal sermon was preached by the Rev. J. A. Kelly, the out-going Moderator, who also delivered a thoughtful address recommending that the Code of Discipline should be revised in accordance with the spirit of the age. Ministers who were present not belonging to the Synod were invited to sit and deliberate. These gentlemen consented. The Rev. F. Thomas was elected Moderator for the ensuing year.

The Non-Subscribing Association assembled under the presidency of the Rev. C. J. M'Alester, who preached a sermon on "Reconciliation." The following day the Rev. T. Dunkerley was unanimously appointed President. A good deal of time was spent in considering whether ministers present, but not members, should be invited to "sit and deliberate," and, after an animated discussion, an adverse decision was arrived at by 18 votes against 13. No doubt many persons will "sit and deliberate" on this decision of the majority of the "Non-Subscribers."

A good deal of routine business was transacted at both assemblies, and it is hoped that satisfactory results will follow.

THE London Anniversaries have taken place, and, as usual, have been well attended and full of interest. The President of the Unitarian Society, Belfast, who is also Secretary of

the Sunday School Committee, the Rev. T. Dunkerley, attended as our representative, and took some part in the proceedings of the different Associations. These annual gatherings are useful, not only in enabling us to review the work of a year, but as giving an opportunity for friends of liberal religion from different parts of the empire to meet together and encourage one another in their efforts to bring about greater enlightenment and a deeper earnestness in matters pertaining to religion.

A WISH has often been expressed by heads of families, by Sunday School teachers and superintendents, that it would be very helpful to have at hand a reliable series of books for general and juvenile reading, which at the same time should be free from objectionable doctrinal teaching.

It gives us great pleasure in calling the attention of our readers to the following publications which have been received for notice:—

Messrs. Chambers' have forwarded to us a small parcel from their "Juvenile Library," every book of which is admirable in its way. The famed "Miscellany" (2/-) needs no commendation from us; "The Steadfast Gabriel" (1/-) is one of Mary Howitt's admirable tales, conveying in the pages of an interesting story excellent moral teaching; "Uncle Sam's Money" (1/-) is a pleasant story of family life, and the individuality of each member is well and usefully pourtrayed; "Moral Courage" (1/-) we can recommend with confidence as a suitable one to put into the hands of children. It contains five short stories, each conveying some useful lesson.

From Cassel's we have received a parcel of their admirable magazines, and it would be a much wiser investment if the reading public would buy such periodicals as the "Saturday Journal," rather than the "scrappy" and "bitty" literature which is now so much in demand.

From John Heywood's we have received a packet of "Paragon" readers, and truly the series is well named, and at the same time the price of each book seems ridiculously low.

We need hardly say that all these may be had at the lowest possible prices at the Depository, 16, Queen's Arcade, Belfast.

IN the spring of 1871 Dean Stanley, when writing of the effort that had been made to get rid of the necessity for repeating the so-called Athanasian Creed, said:—"Nonconformists had as clear a right, as obvious an interest in promoting the amelioration of a great national institute as they had in the ecclesiastical legislation of 1559, 1641, and 1662." Acting on this right, the Unitarians have petitioned the Legislature on the impropriety of the public repetition under the sanction, and, indeed, under the compulsion, of Parliament, of the Creed in question. The earlier "symbols" of the Church, being confessions of faith in the absolute sense of the term, were restricted to a simple adherence to the primary doctrines of Christianity. Even when something like condemnation was added, it did not form any part of the essence of the creed. It is scarcely necessary to say that the Athanasian Creed is a document in which words are used in senses that it is scarcely possible for any, except the most learned, to understand, if even they do. A Bishop to whom complaint was made as to the orthodoxy of a worthy clergyman of his diocese asked his accusers each to write down the sense in which they understood the creed in question; and, tested in that way, he heard no more of their charge. The fact is, the Athanasian Creed had practically almost slipped out of use by the tacit consent of the Church of England. Its reapperance is due to the Tractarian and Ritualistic revival. There is just this consolation for those who have petitioned against it; they are not a whit the worse of its "damnatory clauses." The day has gone past when this species of spiritual boycotting had any terrors for Englishmen.—*Newcastle Chronicle.*

ON Sunday, June 28th, at four o'clock, the Annual Flower Service was held in the Church of the Second Congregation, Rosemary Street. The service being specially for the children of the schools of the congregation and neighbour-

ing schools, seats were reserved for them, while the remaining pews were crowded by the parents and friends of the children. The floral decorations of the interior were designed and carried out by the ladies of the congregation, and were in every respect characterised by that good taste and perception of harmony which ladies invariably bring to bear on works of ornamentation. Large numbers of ladies had worked for days with zeal and enthusiasm. It would be difficult indeed to convey an adequate idea of the attractive and exceedingly pleasing appearance which the church presented. The front of the gallery, the pulpit, the windows, and the vestibule were each treated in different designs, and with different kinds of flowers and evergreens, the contributions of kind friends representing all sections of the community in the country. There was a fine selection of beautiful hymns and music, which were pleasingly rendered by the children. Rev. W. Reynolds gave out two of the hymns in the opening portion of the service, and also read a poem and offered prayer. The remainder of the service was conducted by Rev. J. C. Street, *pastor loci*. Mr. Street delivered a most appropriate address, his subject being "The Beautiful Gates." He described the scene at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple when Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none," &c., and then went on to picture some beautiful Eastern scenes where the poor and the halt lay outside the gates of some of the palaces of delight, looking wistfully within as the gates swung to and fro. He then spoke of the many "gates" through which all had to pass, and dwelt especially upon the gates of life and death, both leading into realms of beauty and joy, and the latter as leading into the glories of the kingdom of heaven. In conclusion, he drew lessons from the flowers and the eager faces of the children. All throughout the address the attention was most marked, and all seemed to gaze with delight upon the varied pictures which the speaker in vivid words put before them. A collection was taken up to defray incidental expenses. The service was brought to a conclusion about half-past five o'clock with the benediction.

THE CHARACTER, AIMS, AND QUALITIES OF A GOOD GOVERNMENT.

BY REV. J. C. STREET.

It is evident that society cannot exist without government. If every man were left at liberty to pursue his own course, and to further his own ends, irrespective of the wishes and and interests of others, we should have continual anarchy, until it resulted in desolation and death. The selfish instincts of mankind are too powerful to be left without restraints and checks. The license of passion, and greed, and ambition must be held firmly in hand, or lust, and robbery, and tyranny will prevail, the strongest arm will rule, and the most wicked natures will be dominant.

Every tribe and nation has felt the need of a central authority. Even in sparsely peopled regions, where the boundless woods have been free for the hunter, and the broad lakes were open to his canoe, the necessity has been felt for some headship, some authority to decide disputed points, to settle recurring difficulties, and to repress incipient lawlessness. In order to secure protection for life and property, men have always been ready to give up some portion of their liberty. They laid a restraint upon themselves in order that the general welfare might be secured.

As tribes grew into communities, and communities developed into nations, the necessity for a central government grew also. Amid the greater number and variety of individual and apparently conflicting interests, there was all the more need of some balancing and restraining power; so governments grew more powerful as well as more necessary. When people are drawn together in great multitudes, and the claimants for food increase more rapidly than the means of producing food, there is a fierce and ever fiercer competition; arts, and devices are resorted to which are not always good, strength overmasters weakness, and so one becomes enormously rich while another is hopelessly poor. There would be no end to this except revolution, bloodshed, and depopulation if some restraints were not employed, and some checks placed upon lawlessness beyond which it dare not go.

So government is a necessity, and is all the more so as the people multiply.

The day may come when central authority among men may not be needed, when each man shall be a law and a judge to himself, when all restraints will come from within, and the power of the magistrates will be a thing of the past, but just now we are far away from such a consummation, greed, lust, and ambition are as powerful now as ever, and unless restrained by an authority external to themselves, would hurry the world into disorder, chaos, and revolution.

Men do not differ as to the need of some government, their differences begin when they talk of the character and limits of government.

Various experiments have been tried, and the ideal government has hardly been discovered yet. We have had the *patriarch* or family chief, the *judge* or tribal chief, and the *king* or national chief. Besides these we have had absolute monarchies, limited monarchies and republics. There has been the rulership by one—Monarchy; the rulership by a *few*—Oligarchy; and the rulership by the *people*—Democracy.

Each of these forms of government has its partizans, who assert its superiority over all others, and the disagreement therefore is general. But it may safely be asserted that no form of government yet discovered has succeeded in establishing the complete happiness of the governed. If the design of government be to secure, what the moral virtue of mankind fails to realise, namely, freedom and security for all the people, then no one can say that any government has yet accomplished its purpose. Inequalities remain, founded on injustice, the chances are not equal, and the few triumph at the expense of the many.

It would be an easy task to show the shortcomings and failures of every government, and to prove its inadequateness for the task it has undertaken; but the same might be said of every other human institution; they are all imperfect and they all need purification. It would be a profitless task to go over the record of failures, to dig out of the graveyards of the past systems that have had their day and ceased to be, and to make the ghosts of multitudinous abortions walk the earth once more. We will leave them to the eternal silences, and turn to more profitable themes.

We know that the government of a family is intended for the welfare and happiness of the family, not for the gratification of power or for the selfish pleasures of the parents; it is for the highest good and truest welfare of each and all. So, we may conclude, the government of a nation is intended for the welfare and happiness of the nation; not for the exaltation of the power of the ruler, not for his gain, or aggrandisement, or selfishness, but for the good, and prosperity, and protection of all. If a *father* rules iniquitously, is harsh and severe, makes his children work for him while he is idle, if he thrives at their expense, we say he is unnatural, a usurper, and a tyrant. So, if a *ruler*, be he chief, king, or president, uses his great power wrongfully; if he is unjust and partial; if he lives idly on the industry of the people; if he gives back no good and faithful service for the honour and greatness that is put upon him; if he be a great leech drawing out the life-blood of the nation, we characterise him as an imposter and a tyrant. By such conduct the object of government is defeated, liberty is not guarded, property is not secured, and happiness is by no means confirmed.

I do not intend to discuss now the question as to what is the best form of government? Suffice it to say that the less government we *need* and *have* the better is it for the welfare of nations and the world. But my intention is to consider what should be the character of government? what aims it should have and what qualities it should display.

These inquiries deserve earnest and deliberate attention.

1. ITS CHARACTER.

By the character of government, I do not mean its *form*, but its *essence*. It may take any of the forms I have mentioned, its outward constitution is not of much importance in the present inquiry, but its inward spirit and life are everything. If it be a low, huxtering, parsimonious, beggarly government, or if it

be a vain reckless, extravagant, and immoral government, whatever form it may take it will be bad, and disastrous to the nation. If, on the other hand, it be a high-minded, just-dealing, large-souled government, its form will be of little significance, but its spirit will be fruitful for good to those who acknowledge its authority. It should draw to itself the best and wisest men, and employ only such instrumentalities as are beyond suspicion. Its character should be *aristocratic*. I do not that it should be in the hands of hereditary lords, or territorial magnates, whom the accident of birth, or the fortunes of war or intrigue make powerful and rich, but the government should be aristocratic in the *true sense*—the government by the *best* and *noblest* men of the nation for the best and noblest purposes. All that is *good* and *great* should be drawn to it; its offices should be filled by tried and trustworthy men, and its affairs should be administered by those whose nobleness of character has been thoroughly established. All favouritism, and nepotism, should be abolished. The seat of the judge should not be bartered for political and party services, but should be the reward of legal eminence, of moral worthiness, and of intellectual fairness. Bishopricks should not be the refuge of destitute sons of lordly houses, or the reward of noisy agitators of ecclesiastical changes, but should be bestowed upon pious, zealous, and able men who are in the Church because they love the Church, and whose highest ambition it is to serve the cause of righteousness and God. The magistracy who have to administer the law throughout the nation should not be appointed because they have served their party, or made large fortunes, or are the wire-pullers of local politics; but because they are good, and true, and able men; who *know* the law, and have courage, and manliness, and independence enough to *administer* it. So through all the operations and ramifications of government there should be a high character; an integrity incapable of meanness; an honesty above temptation. Thus there would be a guarantee against wrong-doing; favouritism would be unknown; the fitting men would be found for the fitting work; incompetent, ignoble, and avaricious office-hunters would have no chance of feeding on the national goods, and there would be general confidence. Such should be the *character* of government.

2. Its Aims.

A good government will seek the welfare and happiness of the governed. It will legislate wisely and generously so that the *food* of the people shall be as free as possible from all restrictions. It will give the greatest possible freedom to *trade*, removing all artificial barriers, and giving the freest scope to the industrial instincts and faculties of the people. It will take away all causes of complaint as to the unequal pressure of law and taxes, and restraints upon different classes of the people. It will remove all appearance of religious inequalities among the subjects of the same empire; will not permit any one church to dominate over another, or to have special privileges while another has corresponding disabilities. It will place all national institutions, educational, philanthropical, or religious equally before all the people, giving no preferences, and recognizing no superiority of claim, except the superiority of intrinsic worthiness. It will make the people feel that the government is their own, that they are not shut out but form part and parcel of its constitution. It will legislate for the *education*, the *morality*, and the *religion* of the people. It will not rest satisfied while there is one child in the dominion, who from the gross neglect of parents, or the immoral greed of employers, is unable to secure a sound and useful education. It will permit no pursuits and occupations, and will throw its shield over none, which are adverse to the interests and the morality of the people.

No considerations of national gain or revenue will weigh even for a moment against the welfare of the nation. It will be a constant study to put all men on an equality before the law, it will exert its utmost power to put down all war and to secure a safe, and lasting, and honourable peace; it will exercise a paternal care over the interests of all; will know no partiality, and will be righteously just. It will ever keep prominent the great purpose of its

existence, not the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but the welfare, the prosperity, and the happiness of all.

Such it seems to me should be the aims of government.

3. ITS QUALITIES.

With *aims* like these no one would doubt a government, which had also ability, sincerity, earnestness, and confidence.

(a) Government cannot be carried on without great power, experience, and skill. The task of the administrator makes the greatest demands upon the intellect. A stupid, blundering ruler is almost as great a curse as a wicked one. To be equal to his great responsibilities he must have a capacious intellect, nobly balanced, and richly furnished. He must be far-sighted; capable of great discrimination; able to compare, correct, and combine. He must know mankind; must be deeply read in human history; must be able to detect and expose sophistry; and must be familiar with the facts, habits, wishes, and hopes of the people. His intellectual greatness must be conspicious, it must be seen that he does not occupy his position by accident, by birth, by favour, or by conspiracy; but in virtue of his intrinsic superiority, his innate and nobly cultured intellect, and his true greatness. Then no one can have room to say that government is in the hands of the spoilt children of blind fortune.

(b) But intellectual greatness alone would be dangerous in the last degree. There must be associated with it an unquestionable and manifest *sincerity*. With declared *aims*, lofty and good, and with large and noble powers, there must be the assurance of sincerity, that the ruler means what he says, that he does not use language to hide but to reveal thought, that he plays no jugglery with conscience; but that when he says he desires and wishes to bring about the welfare of the people, he truly means this and has no other desire. Sincerity is an indispensable virtue. Without it you can no more count upon uniformity in the ruler than in the winds. He will be swayed by motives that are hidden; will take the most solemn oaths one day, and commit an act of iniquity to nullify it the next.

(c) There may be ability and sincerity on the part of the ruler, combined with listlessness and indifference. He may have large capacity, and may be well-meaning; but he may lack *earnestness*. Nothing could be more prejudicial and fatal. Without earnestness there grows up laxity. This is true in every sphere, in business and in religion, as well as in politics and government. A cold indifference settles over men, unless their natures are swayed by a powerful and resistless earnestness. Without it the ruler can accomplish no great thing; he may keep office; the wheels of the state may be kept in motion; but when he attempts to touch great interests; powers arrayed against the welfare of the people; when he tries to bring about any wise reform; he will give way before obstacles, bow at the behest of an organized opposition, and will hold office on sufferance. But an earnest ruler, who throws his soul into his work, who determines to carry it out, cares for power only that he may do good. He throws a new life, and a mighty power into politics. Every act of his arrests attention. His soul is seen in his words. His thoughts are alive. His great ability; his transparent sincerity; and his enkindling earnestness; rally true and noble men about him; and though he may fall before combined faction and stolidity; he falls to rise again; more powerful, more trusted than before. A government is stronger, more honoured, more trusted, and more beloved in proportion to its growing earnestness on behalf of good and generous causes. Without earnestness government is a miserable compromise and sham, but with it a tremendous power and reality.

(d) A government like that I have sketched, able, sincere, and earnest, cannot help but be full of *confidence*. Its aims are good, its capacities are large, and its spirit is in harmony with the people's wants. It will have confidence in itself, confidence in the people, and confidence in its cause. It may well feel and say that time is on its side, it might even without irreverence say that God will fight for it.

A government manifesting qualities like

these—let its form and constitution be what it may—will be sure to command esteem and respect. It has within it the elements of life and power, its declared function is that for which all government is invented and intended, the means it employs are fair and honourable, and therefore it cannot ultimately fail.

What will be the attitude of the people towards such a government? Hitherto the people have distrusted all rulers. They have felt that power was used for bad purposes, that kings and aristocrasies have thrived upon the poverty of the people, and that iniquitous wars in which the people's lives have been squandered, have been undertaken for wicked ambitions, for unholy rivalry, for gross robbery, and to give place, employment, and honour to the rich. They have felt that the strife of politics has been the strife of parties for office, emolument, and dignity, and not for the welfare of the nation; that professions of patriotism were empty words; that love of country meant love of its riches; and that the "dignity and honour" of the nation; a phrase so current on politician's lips, meant aggrandisement, power, and greed for themselves. But convince the people that there is at last a government which is *capable*, and *honest*, and which seeks not its own but the nation's welfare; that its one purpose is to promote the general good, and you completely change their attitude. They will trust, will honour, will confide in, will love such a government, they will rally about it in real earnestness, will give it their hands and their hearts, and will chronicle its glories in the most sacred places of their natures.

A government to be good, and honoured, and trusted must be founded upon *love*. A government by fear is a tyranny, an ugly, hated, bitter usurpation, a thing which is every man's enemy, which deserves no consideration, no respect, no toleration, but which ought to be swept away. Towards such a government the only justifiable attitude is that of revolution, the nation rising as one man, in the dignity of its outraged freedom, and by the stern moral power of its imposing bearing, frowning away, and for ever consigning to oblivion, the ignoble and dishonoured thing. It is tyrannies like these which have soured men's minds, made them say that government in its best state, is but a necessary evil, and that it is the badge of lost innocence. The records of history tell such sickening and disheartening stories of kings and rulers that no wonder Paine should say "the palaces of kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of Paradise," and that many should look upon government as devices of the devil, to irritate, madden, and destroy mankind. But the picture has another side, it may yet be an ideal in the mind of the poet and the thinker; but it is an ideal capable of realization, and which the devout man believes will yet be seen in all its beauty.

This government, like the government of a *home* will be founded on love, its laws will be enacted by wisdom for the general good, its officers will be peace and its exactors righteousness, it will seek to make all under its rule happy, and wise, and good, it will resort to no trickery, no subterfuges, no subtleties, it will work in the daylight, having no secret diplomacy, no hidden treaties, it will be equal, and just in all its dealings in one word, it will be a religious government, animated by the spirit, and controlled by the teachings of Jesus, it will try to do for its subjects what he tried to do for humanity, to raise, ennoble, bless, and save.

And to such rulership the people will give their hearts. As a child trusts in its parents, so will a nation trust in its rulers. It will believe in them and confide in them. It will have no fear, and no doubt of their motives, but will be assured they are seeking the highest welfare of them all.

And in a government like this, not yet realized, but certainly to come, we shall learn our noblest lessons concerning God's government of the universe, and shall find that as a good parent, and a wise government rule by love, so the good Father of all, and the wise ruler of eternal ages and innumerable worlds, bases His government upon the same immortal and unfailing principle, that of true and trusting love.

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